

Differences on perception of parental role between male athletes and their parents

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DIFFERENCES ON PERCEPTION OF PARENTAL ROLE BETWEEN MALE ATHLETES AND THEIR PARENTS

KEYWORDS: Sport involvement, children, parental support, parental pressure.

ABSTRACT: Parents are substantially involved in their children's sport experiences. They typically make the initial decision to enroll their children in sport and have a significant impact on many of the positive outcomes of their child's sport participation. The primary role of the parent in youth sports is to provide emotional, financial and provisionary support for their children. However, there is a growing concern about the parents' excessive involvement in sports as it seems that certain aspects of parental involvement are detrimental to the development and experiences of young athlete. The purpose of the present study was to assess the perception of athletes and parents for the parental role in football. The sample was 128 participants (athletes and their parents). They complete a Questionnaire for the Parental Role in Sports with three factors: parental support, parental pressure and athlete's satisfaction. The results demonstrated statistical significance differences among athletes and parents on factors of pressure and support. Athletes demonstrated less "pressured" and more "supported" than their parents' perception. The results of the study for parent-child perceptions presents preliminary evidence in support of the notion that parents and their children do not agree on measures of parental pressure and support in their children's sport.

The benefits of involving children in sports are a widely discussed issue. In many cultures, sports participation is a mean for children's development (Wagnsson, Augustsson and Patriksson, 2013). Great importance has to be given to the fact that athletic experiences sustain not only the physical but also the psychological development of children and adolescents (Boixadós, Cruz, Torregrosa and Valiente, 2004; Müller and Sternad, 2004). In addition to the sporting experiences gained from their athletic participation, young athletes are helped to develop leadership skills, take initiatives, learn how to set goals and improve their academic performance as well (Gould and Carson, 2008).

Parents are substantially involved in their children's sport experiences. They typically make the initial decision to enroll their children in sport, the kind of sport their kids will participate in and have a significant impact on many of the positive

outcomes derived from their child's sport involvement (Wuerth, Leeb and Alfermann, 2004). Wheeler (2012) claimed that kids' taking part in any physical activity strongly depends on their family habits. The same result had also been concluded by Toftegaard-Stockel, Nielsen, Ibsen and Anderson (2011) who supported that if one or both parents are unemployed, then their children are less likely to implicate in sports. According to Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes and Pennisi (2008) most of the parents spend big amounts of money and time and consume emotional energy to support their kids participation in sports. Thus, it is understood that the primary role of the parents in youth sports is to provide emotional, financial and provisionary support for their children.

Additionally, parents have the role of the interpreter and role models for their children. As interpreters, they convey beliefs and values about sport, and as role models they show

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ways of athletic behaviors (Knight, Boden and Holt, 2010). Stroebe (2006) supports that parental involvement seems to have a great impact on the way adolescents are experiencing training and performing, since without their help it would be difficult to cope with the high demands in competitive level.

However, there is a growing concern about the parents' excessive involvement in sports. This is due to the fact that some specific aspects of parental behaviors are detrimental to young athletes' development (Nicholas et al., 2008; Williams and Lester, 2000). A range of studies revealed unrealistic expectations, recognition of their own value through the athletic success of their children, great emphasis on victory and frequent and excessive criticism of performance (Gould, 2009; Knight, Neely and Holt, 2011). Thus, it becomes evident that parental pressure has a big influence on the athletic experience of children and adolescents (Stroebe, 2006). In a survey of Reeves, Nicholls and McKenna (2009), athletes reported that excessive parent involvement was a source of anxiety for them (Knight, et al., 2010). Researches of Knight et al. (2011) and O'Rourke, Smith, Smoll and Cummings (2011) revealed that stress and fear of failure, when the young athletes were under pressure conditions, are due to the concerning their own parents. Unrealistic expectations seem to contribute to burnout, excessive training and acute injuries of athletes (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2001; Patel and Nelson, 2000). Consequently, the pressure exerted by parents on athletes is related to their long term stay in the field of sport (Yesu and Harwood, 2015). Anderson, Funk, Elliot and Smith (2003) argued that when parental involvement is perceived as pressure athletes satisfaction is decreased, and so parental involvement becomes a negative situation (Stroebe, 2006). Even good intentioned pressure has consequences of reduced motivation and satisfaction (Sanchez-Miguel, Leo, Sanchez-Oliva, Amado and Garcia-Calvo, 2013).

Children seem to prefer their parents' supportive involvement in athletic course. Support is about praise, understanding, providing resources, (Knight et al., 2011) and other elements and is associated with greater athletic participation, satisfaction, self-esteem and other positive reactions on the part of athletes (Anderson et al., 2003; Kanters, Bocarro and Casper, 2008).

Although parents have always good intentions, it seems important to think about how their children feel about their behavior, since parental pressure appears to be a "feature of

personal experience of the child, which depends on the behavior of parents and the child's preferences" (Stroebe, 2006). Thus, parents' involvement in the child's sporting experience cannot be described as purely positive or negative, as the child's own quality assessment is the most important element (Stein and Raedeke, 1999). It is important to understand that parents who think they are supportive and positive towards their children, might, based on the child's perceptions, have a particularly negative impact on them, which may even result in withdrawal from sport (Kanters et al., 2008). The purpose of the present study was to assess the perception of athletes and parents for the parental role in soccer.

Methods

Participants

The sample was 256 participants (128 athletes and 128 parents). Athletes were all male, aged 13 to 15 years ($M=14.34$). Parents were 55 male and 73 female, ages from 35 to 57 years ($M=44.67$).

Measures

A Greek version of Questionnaire for the Parental Role in Sports (Ioannides and Alexandris, 2009; Leff and Hoyle, 1995) was used in order to evaluate the perception of athletes and parents for the parental role in soccer. It included 17 items and three factors: parental support ($\alpha=.64$), parental pressure ($\alpha=.72$) and athlete's satisfaction ($\alpha=.67$). The Questionnaire assessed children's perception for the parental involvement in sport on a four point Likert Scale. In order to assess parents' perceptions for their involvement, the questions were adapted to parents (e.g. "my parents help me to feel better after a defeat" to "I help my child to feel better after a defeat"). The questionnaire was tested with test-retest and internal consistency (Cronbach's α) reliability with acceptable indices. The validity was tested by construct validity with acceptable index too (Ioannides and Alexandris, 2009).

The perception of the parental involvement was evaluated by 11 questions. The first six questions, through a four grades Likert Scale, intended to players answering about the level their parents: 1) watch their matches, 2) enjoy discussing with them about their matches, 3) support their endeavor, 4) help them financially, 5) are proud of them depend less the wins or loses, 6) help them feel better after a loss.

The perception of parental pressure was assessed by five questions, in which the athletes were asked about: 1) the expectations of their parents for better performance, 2) the level of their criticism, 3) their parents' reaction after a loss, 4) if their parents were interested about winning or for the pleasure of their endeavor, 5) the pressure they are exerted by their parents in order to perform better.

Finally, the children's satisfaction derived from the game participation was evaluated by five questions. The participants were asked to respond to their general feelings for their involvement in the soccer sport. Specifically they had to answer if: 1) they enjoy the training, 2) they wish to have chosen another sport, 3) they are more involved to soccer now than they used to be, 4) they will keep up playing soccer for the rest of their lives and 5) they consider the time they dedicate to soccer as waste or valuable.

Procedure

Athletes completed the questionnaires on a different time than their parents, in a seminar room. Their parents completed the questionnaires another day at the same room, without knowing that their children had completed the same questionnaires before. For the statistical analysis, IBM Statistics 23.0 was used, and the analyses were executed with Pearson r correlation index and ANOVA for the differences among parents and athletes.

Results

The correlation among the factors of the questionnaire was examined by Pearson's r index for the perceptions of parents and athletes (table 1).

The results demonstrated that the perceptions for athletes' satisfaction have a positive correlation with the level of support that athletes perceiving for their parents (for both parents and athletes). The correlations are statistically significant at levels $p < .01$ and $p < .05$ correspondingly. The correlation for perceived satisfaction and pressure was negative, according to parents' perceptions, statistically significant at $p < .01$ level.

In order to examine the differences among parents' and athletes' perceptions on the three factors, an ANOVA was conducted (table 2).

The results demonstrated statistical significance differences among parents and athletes on factors of pressure, support and satisfaction. Athletes demonstrated less "pressured" and more "supported" than their parents' perception. They demonstrated more satisfaction than their parents' perception too.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to exam the perceptions about parental role in soccer, based on athletes and parents perceptions. Parents have a significant impact on their child's satisfaction on sport participation (Wuerth et al., 2004) because of their behavior and their attitudes through their involvement in sports. The way that they provide support on their children seems to be a major factor to their positive outcomes of sport (Gould et al., 2008). Stroebel (2006) supports that parental involvement seems to have the major influence on the way adolescents are experiencing sport.

The results of the present study demonstrated that the way that athletes perceive their parents behavior, defines the feelings of satisfaction they gain in sport environment (Anderson et al., 2003; Stroebel, 2006). If parents tend to be more supportive and avoid pressing athletes, they have positive feelings for their participation. Besides, parents have the same perception about their children's satisfaction according to their behavior. The results of the study for parent-child agreement presents preliminary evidence in support of the notion that parents and their children do not agree on measures of parental pressure and support in their children's sport (Elliott and Drummond, 2015; Marsh et al., 2015).

The findings of the present study about differences on athletes' and their parents' perceptions are not similar with past studies and the perception that parents pressing their children (Kanters et al., 2008; Sanchez-Miguel et al., 2013). This result should probably due to the sample of the present study, which was athletes and parents from a soccer academy and had education programs for parents and their behavior in sport. This condition should probably has an influence to their attitudes.

According to the results of the present study, it seems to be crucial for athlete's development to feel satisfaction from their parents' behavior and have similar perceptions about their involvement in sport.

	Support		Pressure		Satisfaction	
	Athletes	Parents	Athletes	Parents	Athletes	Parents
Support	–	–	.137	-.108	.407**	.307*
Pressure	–	–	–	–	.116	-.451**
Satisfaction	–	–	–	–	–	–

** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

Table 1. Correlations among the factors of the questionnaire for athletes and parents

	Parents	Athletes	
	M (SD)	M (SD)	F
Support	18.93 (1.80)	20.06 (1.97)	11.22*
Pressure	13.40 (2.54)	12.23 (2.38)	7.23*
Satisfaction	14.98 (1.99)	15.65 (1.48)	4.70*

* $p < .05$

Table 2. ANOVA for differences for the three factors of the questionnaire among parents and athletes

DIFERENCIAS EN LA PERCEPCIÓN DEL ROL PARENTAL ENTRE LOS ATLETAS MASCULINOS Y SUS PADRES

PALABRAS CLAVE: Implicación deportiva, niños, apoyo parental, presión parental.

RESUMEN: Los padres están muy involucrados en la experiencia deportiva de sus hijos. Son ellos los que tradicionalmente toman la decisión inicial de apuntar a sus niños a actividades deportivas y, además, ejercen un impacto significativo sobre los resultados positivos de la participación deportiva de sus hijos. El rol principal de los padres en el deporte juvenil es dar apoyo emocional, económico, provisional a sus hijos. Sin embargo, hay una preocupación creciente referida a la implicación excesiva de los padres en el deporte ya que parece que algunos aspectos de la implicación de los padres son cruciales para el desarrollo y las experiencias de los jóvenes deportistas. El objetivo del presente trabajo fue evaluar la percepción de los deportistas y sus padres sobre el papel de los padres en el fútbol. La muestra fue de 128 participantes (deportistas y sus padres). Rellenaron el Questionnaire for the Parental Role in Sports que consta de tres factores: apoyo parental, presión parental, y satisfacción de los deportistas. Los resultados indicaron diferencias significativas entre deportistas y padres en los factores de presión y de apoyo. Los deportistas parecieron menos “presionados” y más “apoyados” que la percepción de sus padres. Los resultados del estudio sobre la percepción de padres-hijos aportaron evidencias preliminares que respaldan la idea que los padres y sus hijos no están de acuerdo sobre las medidas de la presión parental y el apoyo a la participación de sus hijos en el deporte.

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